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Sustainable development: implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

Report of the Second Committee*

Rapporteur: Mr. Paul Losoko Efambe **Empole** (Democratic Republic of the Congo)

I. Introduction

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 20 (see A/65/436, para. 2). Action on sub-item (e) was taken at the 27th and 33rd meetings, on 4 November and 1 December 2010. An account of the Committee's consideration of the sub-item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/65/SR.27 and 33).

II. Consideration of draft resolutions A/C.2/65/L.21 and A/C.2/65/L.65

2. At the 27th meeting, on 4 November, the representative of Yemen, on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations that are members of the Group of 77 and China, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa" (A/C.2/65/L.21), which read:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Recalling* its resolutions 58/211 of 23 December 2003, 61/202 of 20 December 2006, 62/193 of 19 December 2007, 63/218 of 19 December 2008 and 64/202 of 21 December 2009 and other resolutions relating to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in

* The report of the Committee on this item will be issued in 10 parts, under the symbol A/65/436 and Add.1-9.

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Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,

"*Recalling also* the 2005 World Summit Outcome and the final outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals,

"*Recalling further* the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification 2010-2020,

"*Recalling* the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building of developing countries,

"*Reasserting* its commitment to combating and reversing desertification and land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, consistent with articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Convention, and to mitigating the effects of drought, eradicating extreme poverty, promoting sustainable development and food security and improving the livelihoods of vulnerable people affected by drought and/or desertification, taking into account the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018), supporting the exchange of best practices and lessons learned, including from regional cooperation, and the mobilization of adequate and predictable financial resources,

"*Reaffirming* the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ('Johannesburg Plan of Implementation'), in which the Convention is recognized as one of the tools for poverty eradication, and reiterating its resolve to eradicate extreme poverty,

"*Acknowledging* that desertification, land degradation and drought are challenges of a global dimension in that they affect all regions of the world,

"*Concerned* by the increasing frequency and severity of dust/sandstorms affecting arid and semi-arid regions and their negative impact on the environment and the economy,

"*Concerned also* by the negative impacts that desertification, land degradation, loss of biodiversity and climate change have on each other, recognizing the potential benefits of complementarities in addressing these problems at all levels in a mutually supportive manner, and recognizing also the interrelationship between climate change, loss of biodiversity and desertification and the need to intensify efforts to combat desertification and promote sustainable land management,

"*Concerned further* that extreme desertification and land degradation processes affect a quarter of Latin America and the Caribbean region, as well as Asia, a situation which has not been perceived in all its magnitude, increasing the vulnerability of poor communities and compromising food security,

"*Noting* the need for enhanced cooperation among the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the

Convention on Biological Diversity ('the Rio Conventions'), while respecting their individual mandates,

"*Underlining* the cross-sectoral nature of desertification, land degradation and drought mitigation, and in this regard inviting all relevant United Nations organizations to cooperate with the Convention secretariat in supporting an effective response to desertification and drought,

"*Concerned* by the situation of one billion drylands inhabitants, who are among the poorest on the planet and are lagging behind in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular those relating to hunger and poverty,

"*Recognizing* the need for investment in sustainable land management in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, and emphasizing the need for the full implementation of the ten-year strategic plan and framework,

"*Noting* that the ten-year strategic plan and framework highlights the importance given to the development and implementation of scientifically based and sound methods for monitoring and assessing desertification and the efforts under way to promote scientific research and to strengthen the scientific base of the activities on desertification and drought under the Convention,

"1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa;

"2. *Invites* Member States to enhance support for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, including by mainstreaming its core issues into development strategies, to integrate desertification and land degradation into their plans and strategies for sustainable development and to integrate national action programmes related to drought and desertification into national development strategies;

"3. *Urges* the United Nations system and Member States, in particular the donor community, to pay specific attention to the billion drylands inhabitants by investing more resources in drylands if Millennium Development Goal targets are to be met and an equal distribution of development to be achieved;

"4. *Welcomes* the outcomes of the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development regarding desertification, land degradation and drought and emphasizes the need to implement the policy options pertaining to that session;

"5. *Fully aware of* the need to cooperate at the global and regional levels, with a view to preventing and managing dust/sandstorms including by sharing related information, forecasting and early warning systems, and affirming that combating sand and dust storms demands financial support and the transfer of technology from developed countries to developing countries;

"6. *Calls for* the active additional substantive engagement and support of all parties, including in terms of human and financial resources, in the process of strengthening the scientific base of the activities on desertification and drought under the Convention, particularly those required to measure the impact of the implementation of the Convention;

"7. *Promotes* the strengthening of the advisory role of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the Committee on Science and Technology through their recommendations in order to monitor effectively the decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;

"8. *Calls for* the enhancement of the technical capabilities of national coordinating bodies and national focal points of the Convention, through the provision of an institutional and coordinated scientific back-up;

"9. *Decides* to convene a one day high-level meeting on the theme, 'Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication', to be held on Monday, 19 September 2011, prior to the general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly;

"10. *Convinced* that the high-level meeting will constitute a significant event that will raise the awareness of desertification, land degradation and drought at the highest level, reaffirm the fulfilment of all commitments to the Convention and its ten-year strategic plan and framework (2008-2018), ensuring a higher priority for desertification, land degradation and drought on the international agenda, in particular at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio plus 20):

(a) Decides that the meeting will be structured around an opening plenary meeting followed by one interactive panel in the morning, on the same theme as the high-level meeting, followed by an interactive panel in the afternoon and a closing plenary;

(b) Decides that the panels will be co-chaired by Heads of State or Government, with due regard to geographical balance, in consultation with regional groups;

(c) Decides that the meeting will be held at the highest possible political level, with the participation of Heads of State or Government, ministers, special representatives and other representatives, as appropriate;

(d) Decides that the preparations for the meeting will be undertaken under the aegis of the President of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly;

(e) Requests the Secretary-General to prepare a background paper for the high-level meeting, in consultation with Member States, to be available no later than June 2011;

(f) Decides that the meeting will be chaired by the President of the General Assembly who will present to the closing plenary a summary of the discussions prepared by the co-chairs to be transmitted, under his authority, to the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations

Convention to Combat Desertification, to be held in the Republic of Korea, in 2011;

"11. *Welcomes* the enhanced collaboration and cooperation between the secretariat of the Convention and United Nations programmes, funds, agencies and entities working on land degradation issues;

"12. *Notes* the outcome of the fifth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility, and invites donors to the Facility to ensure that it is adequately resourced during the next replenishment period in order to allow it to allocate sufficient and adequate resources to its six focal areas, in particular its land degradation focal area;

"13. *Welcomes* the amendment to the Global Environment Facility Instrument, whereby the Facility shall be available to serve as a financial mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, pursuant to article 20, paragraph 2 (b), and article 21 of the Convention;

"14. *Takes note* of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the assessment of the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification as well as the decision of the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session requesting the Bureau of the ninth session to undertake and supervise an evaluation of existing and potential reporting, accountability and institutional arrangements for the Global Mechanism and their legal and financial implications;

"15. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-sixth session the sub-item entitled 'Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa';

"16. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution."

3. At its 33rd meeting, on 1 December, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa" (A/C.2/65/L.65), submitted by the Vice-Chair of the Committee, Csilla Würtz (Hungary), on the basis of informal consultations held on draft resolution A/C.2/65/L.21.

4. The Committee also had before it a statement of the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.2/65/L.21, submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly (A/C.2/65/L.62).

5. At the same meeting, upon the proposal of the Chair, the Committee agreed to waive the relevant provision of rule 120 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and proceed to take action on draft resolution A/C.2/65/L.65.

6. Also at the same meeting, the Secretary of the Committee read out a statement of the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.2/65/L.65.

7. Also at the 33rd meeting, the Vice-Chair orally corrected the draft resolution (see A/C.2/65/SR.33).

8. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/65/L.65 as orally corrected (see para. 10).

9. In the light of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/65/L.65, draft resolution A/C.2/65/L.21 was withdrawn by its sponsors, together with the statement of programme budget implications contained in document A/C.2/65/L.62.

III. Recommendation of the Second Committee

10. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 58/211 of 23 December 2003, 61/202 of 20 December 2006, 62/193 of 19 December 2007, 63/218 of 19 December 2008 and 64/202 of 21 December 2009 and other resolutions relating to the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa,[1]

Recalling also the 2005 World Summit Outcome[2] and the final outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals,[3]

Recalling further the United Nations Decade for Deserts and the Fight against Desertification (2010-2020),

Recalling the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building of developing countries,[4]

Supporting the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification through joint action of the international community in addressing the causes and poverty impacts of desertification and land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, consistent with articles 1, 2 and 3 of the Convention, taking into account the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018),[5] supporting the exchange of best practices and lessons learned, including from regional cooperation, and the mobilization of adequate and predictable financial resources,

Reaffirming the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development ("Johannesburg Plan of Implementation"),[6] in which the Convention is recognized as one of the tools for poverty eradication, and reiterating its resolve to eradicate extreme poverty,

Acknowledging that desertification, land degradation and drought are challenges of a global dimension in that they affect all regions of the world,

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[1] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1954, No. 33480.

[2] See resolution 60/1.

[3] See resolution 65/1.

[4] UNEP/GC.23/6/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex.

[5] A/C.2/62/7, annex.

[6] *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

Concerned that extreme desertification and land degradation processes affect also the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, the Northern Mediterranean, and Central and Eastern Europe, a situation which, having been fully described in the ten-year strategic plan and framework, has not been acknowledged in all its magnitude, increasing the vulnerability of poor communities and compromising food security,

Concerned also by the increasing frequency and severity of dust storms and sandstorms affecting arid and semi-arid regions and their negative impact on the environment and the economy,

Concerned further by the negative impacts that desertification, land degradation, loss of biodiversity and climate change have on each other, recognizing the potential benefits of complementarities in addressing these problems at all levels in a mutually supportive manner, and recognizing also the interrelationship between climate change, loss of biodiversity and desertification and the need to intensify efforts to combat desertification and promote sustainable land management,

Concerned by the negative economic impacts of desertification, land degradation and drought and in this regard welcoming the organization in 2012 of the second scientific conference on economic assessment of desertification, sustainable land management and resilience of arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas,

Noting the need for enhanced cooperation among the secretariats of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity ("the Rio Conventions"), while respecting their individual mandates,

Underlining the cross-sectoral nature of desertification, land degradation and drought mitigation, and in this regard inviting all relevant United Nations organizations to cooperate with the Convention secretariat in supporting an effective response to those challenges,

Expressing concern that one billion inhabitants of drylands are among the poorest on the planet and are lagging behind in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in particular those relating to hunger and poverty, as indicated in the joint report of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the United Nations Development Programme entitled *The Forgotten Billion: MDG Achievement in the Drylands*,

Recognizing the need for investment in sustainable land management in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas and emphasizing the need for the full implementation of the ten-year strategic plan and framework,

Noting that the ten-year strategic plan and framework highlights the importance given to the development and implementation of scientifically based and sound methods for monitoring and assessing desertification and the efforts under way to promote scientific research and to strengthen the scientific base of the activities on desertification and drought under the Convention,

Welcoming the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at its ninth session to endorse the offer of the

Government of the Republic of Korea to host the tenth session of the Conference of the Parties in Changwon City, Gyeongnam Province, from 10 to 21 October 2011,

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa;[7]

2. *Invites* Member States to enhance support for the implementation of the Convention,[1] including by mainstreaming its core issues into development strategies, where appropriate and needed, to integrate desertification and land degradation into their plans and strategies for sustainable development and to integrate national action programmes related to drought and desertification into national development strategies;

3. *Invites* Member States, in particular the donor community and the United Nations system, to address the needs of more than one billion inhabitants of drylands by encouraging appropriate investments to contribute to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, in those areas;

4. *Welcomes* the outcomes of the seventeenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development[8] regarding desertification, land degradation and drought, and emphasizes the need to implement the policy options pertaining to thematic clusters of that session;

5. *Fully aware* of the need to cooperate at the global and regional levels, with a view to preventing and managing dust storms and sandstorms, including by sharing related information, forecasting and early warning systems, invites Member States and relevant organizations to cooperate in sharing information, forecasting and early warning systems related to dust storms and sandstorms;

6. *Invites* all parties and all involved institutions to engage and actively support the process of strengthening the scientific base of the activities on desertification and drought under the Convention, in particular those required to assess the economic impacts of desertification, land degradation and drought in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, and to measure the impact of the implementation of the Convention and the subsequent enhancement of the technical capabilities of national coordinating bodies and national focal points of the Convention;

7. *Recommends* the strengthening of the advisory role of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and the Committee on Science and Technology through their recommendations in order to monitor effectively the decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;

8. *Requests* all States parties to the Convention to promote awareness among local populations, in particular women, young people and civil society organizations, and to include them in the implementation of the ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008-2018),[5] and encourages affected States parties and donors to take into account the issue of

[7] A/65/294.

[8] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2009, Supplement No. 9* (E/2009/29).

participation of civil society in Convention processes when setting priorities in national development strategies, in conformity, inter alia, with the comprehensive communication strategy adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session;

9. *Decides* to convene a one-day high-level meeting on the theme "Addressing desertification, land degradation and drought in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication" on Tuesday, 20 September 2011, prior to the general debate of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly;

10. *Decides* to hold the general debate of its sixty-sixth session from Wednesday, 21 September 2011, on the understanding that these arrangements shall in no way create a precedent for the general debate at future sessions;

11. *Convinced* that the high-level meeting should contribute to raising awareness of desertification, land degradation and drought at the highest level, reaffirm the fulfilment of all commitments to the Convention and its ten-year strategic plan and framework (2008-2018), ensuring a higher priority for desertification, land degradation and drought on the international agenda, and also contribute to the preparation of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio plus 20):

(a) Decides that the meeting will be organized within existing resources and structured around an opening plenary meeting, followed by one interactive panel in the morning, on the same theme as the high-level meeting, followed by a second interactive panel in the afternoon, followed by a closing plenary;

(b) Decides also that the panels will be co-chaired by Heads of State or Government, one from the North and one from the South for each panel, to be appointed by the President of the General Assembly, with due regard to geographical balance, in consultation with regional groups;

(c) Encourages holding the meeting at the highest possible political level, with the participation of Heads of State or Government, ministers, special representatives and other representatives, as appropriate;

(d) Decides that the preparations for the meeting will be undertaken under the authority of the President of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly, and that the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification will serve as the focal point of the high-level meeting;

(e) Requests the Secretary-General to prepare a background paper for the high-level meeting, in consultation with Member States, to be available no later than June 2011;

(f) Decides that the meeting will be chaired by the President of the General Assembly, who will present at the closing plenary meeting a summary of the discussions based on the report of the co-chairs, for transmission, under his authority, to the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification at its tenth session, to be held from 10 to 21 October 2011 in Changwon City, Gyeongnam Province, Republic of Korea, and to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio plus 20);

(g) Invites heads of the United Nations funds and programmes, the specialized agencies and regional commissions, Executive Secretaries of the two

other Rio Conventions and heads of intergovernmental organizations and entities having observer status in the General Assembly to participate, as appropriate, in the meeting, in accordance with the rules and procedures established by the General Assembly;

(h) Decides that the President of the General Assembly will consult with representatives of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, civil society organizations and the private sector, and with Member States, as appropriate, on the list of representatives of non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector that may participate in the meeting;

(i) Decides that the speaking order at the opening meeting will be as follows: the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the President of the ninth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the incoming President of the tenth session of the Conference, the Group of 77 and China, the European Union, the Group of African States and other Member States, in accordance with United Nations protocol;

12. *Welcomes* the enhanced collaboration and cooperation between the secretariat of the Convention and United Nations programmes, funds, agencies and entities working on land degradation issues;

13. *Notes* the ongoing work of the Joint Liaison Group of the secretariats and offices of the relevant subsidiary bodies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and encourages continuing cooperation in order to promote complementarities in the work of the secretariats while respecting their independent legal status;

14. *Also notes* the outcome of the fifth replenishment of the Global Environment Facility, and invites donors to the Facility to ensure that it is adequately resourced during the next replenishment period, to enable it to allocate sufficient and adequate resources to its six focal areas, in particular its land degradation focal area;

15. *Welcomes* the amendment to the Global Environment Facility instrument whereby the Facility shall be available to serve as a financial mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, pursuant to article 20, paragraph 2 (b), and article 21 of the Convention;

16. *Takes note* of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the assessment of the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification[9] and of the decision of the Conference of the Parties at its ninth session[10] requesting the Bureau of the ninth session, together with the Managing Director of the Global Mechanism and the Executive Secretary, and taking into account the views of other interested relevant entities such as the host countries and the International Fund for Agricultural Development, to undertake and supervise an evaluation of existing and potential reporting, accountability and institutional arrangements for the Global

[9] See A/64/379.

[10] ICCD/COP(9)/18/Add.1, decision 6/COP.9.

Mechanism and their legal and financial implications, including the possibility of identifying a new institution or organization to house the Global Mechanism, taking into account the scenarios presented in the Joint Inspection Unit assessment of the Global Mechanism and the need to avoid duplication and overlap in the work of the secretariat of the Convention and the Global Mechanism, and also requesting the Bureau of the ninth session to submit to the Conference of the Parties at its tenth session a report on that evaluation for consideration and decision on the issue of reporting, accountability and institutional arrangements for the Global Mechanism;

17. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its sixty-sixth session the sub-item entitled "Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa";

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-sixth session a report on the implementation of the present resolution.